United Nations S/PV.3765 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-second Year

Provisional

3765th Meeting
Tuesday, 15 April 1997, 4 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Monteiro	(Portugal)
Members:	Chile	Mr. Somavía
	China	Mr. Wang Xuexian
	Costa Rica	Mr. Sáenz Murillo
	Egypt	Mr. Elaraby
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Guinea-Bissau	Mr. Cabral
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Kenya	Mr. Mahugu
	Poland	Mr. Matuszewski
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Choi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Sweden	Mr. Osvald
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Richmond
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

97-85383 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one week of the date of publication*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

The meeting was resumed on Tuesday, 15 April 1997, at 4.15 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Tajikistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Netherlands. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Berteling (Netherlands): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following associated countries have aligned themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway also align themselves with this statement.

For many years, the people of Afghanistan have been suffering from war, human rights violations, extortion and corruption. They are tired of the conflict and long for peace, justice and order. However, the European Union notes with deep concern the continuation and even the intensification of armed hostilities in Afghanistan. The warring factions still seem to believe in a military solution to the conflict. The European Union calls on all Afghan parties to cease the hostilities and to engage in political dialogue aimed at the establishment of a broad-based government representing the different ethnic and religious groups in the country, and at achieving national reconciliation.

Furthermore, harmful influence by countries in the region continues. In this context, the European Union wishes to reaffirm its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. The European Union strongly urges third parties to refrain from interfering in the conflict and from supplying arms to the warring factions. On 17 December 1996 the European Union established an arms embargo concerning Afghanistan, under which no European Union member State will deliver arms to any of the warring parties in that country. The associated countries have aligned themselves with this embargo. The European Union encourages all States to follow a similar policy of restraint.

The European Union encourages the States in the region to support the United Nations efforts to promote peace in Afghanistan and to use any influence they have to encourage the Afghan parties to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

The European Union reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict. The European Union fully supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, which is uniquely placed to act as an impartial mediator in the search for peace. It calls upon all Afghan parties to cooperate with the United Nations Special Mission to achieve a negotiated and comprehensive solution. As a first step, there should be an immediate ceasefire.

The already serious situation in Afghanistan is compounded by grave and persistent human rights violations and breaches of humanitarian law. Of particular concern to the European Union is the deteriorating situation of women and girls, who are increasingly deprived of their human rights, particularly in areas controlled by the Taliban. The European Union is also concerned about the situation of displaced persons in Afghanistan, in particular those from villages north of Kabul. The European Union urgently appeals to all Afghan parties involved to respect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In addition, the European Union wishes to express its concern about the conditions under which international personnel and non-governmental organizations have to work in Afghanistan.

The European Union is also worried to note that the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan increases the potential for international terrorism and drug trafficking with destabilizing effects for the region and beyond. The European Union therefore calls upon all parties in Afghanistan to halt such activities.

The European Union is actively engaged in discussions in various forums with a view to enhancing humanitarian aid and reconstruction and developing a

unitary approach by the donor community to the Afghan crisis.

As the leading contributor of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, the European Union remains concerned about the possible repercussions of the violations of human rights on the beneficiaries of European Union, United Nations and other relief programmes in Afghanistan. It looks forward to continuing the dialogue with all the parties concerned on cooperation modalities aimed at ensuring the delivery of aid while maintaining the quality of support already provided to the people of Afghanistan, irrespective of their gender and ethnic background.

The European Union draws attention to the existence of mine-clearing programmes in Afghanistan and urges all Afghan parties to support and participate in these programmes. In this context, the European Union also appeals to the Afghan parties to put a complete halt to the use of landmines, in view of the great number of innocent people falling victim to these weapons.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the European Union's continuing commitment to support actively the United Nations in its search for and its facilitation of a resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan, which has claimed so many innocent lives.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his comprehensive, to-the-point and valuable report on the situation in Afghanistan. We concur with the observations and recommendations in his report.

Since the last meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council on this subject and the meeting of interested countries here in New York, a considerable amount of time has passed. In this period the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Holl, has made concerted efforts to make further progress in bringing together the warring parties and to achieve the urgent task of establishing a ceasefire, which could then be the basis for an improvement in the political and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. There have also been efforts, including those of my country, in support of United Nations efforts to bring the same parties to the negotiating table to help them reach a certain common ground and thus contribute to finding a solution to the crisis.

As we understand from the Secretary-General's report, very limited progress was achieved during the Intra-Afghan Working Group meetings convened by the Special Mission. However, a notable aspect of that Working Group was that it brought together, for the first time, the Taliban and the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan.

As confirmed by the report of the Secretary-General, the political situation in Afghanistan has not improved over the past months. The humanitarian situation has even worsened. It is most unfortunate for the long-suffering people of Afghanistan that the warring factions, and in particular the Taliban, appear determined to pursue the military option. It is therefore necessary to bring the Taliban into the negotiation and reconciliation process. As has also been emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, the possibility of an increase in the military activity of the Taliban will emerge when favourable weather conditions prevail in the coming months. This is the imminent threat that we are facing.

Within the context of trying to contribute to the efforts aimed at finding a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministers of Iran, Pakistan and Turkey met in Istanbul on 5 January 1997. The three Ministers reaffirmed their readiness and determination to give their full support to the Afghan people, in the direction of the goals set by the United Nations. Turkey also carried out contacts with each of the warring factions with a view to exploring whether we could be of any assistance in bringing them to the negotiating table. Although initial reactions from all the sides were favourable, at a late stage one of the parties indicated that it was unable to attend.

In the light of all these developments, it is our opinion that the immediate goal, as clearly set out in the report of the Secretary-General, and as pursued by the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, should be to convince the sides that military ascendancy by one over the others will not serve, in the long run, the interests of Afghan people. We strongly believe that there is no better way to achieve peace in Afghanistan than by initiating a healthy dialogue between the various factions.

One of the major obstacles to convincing the faction leaders that a military solution is not only undesirable but also unattainable is the continuing supply of weapons,

military equipment and ammunition from outside. As long as such foreign interference continues, the sides, and especially the Taliban, will see no incentive to desist from pursuing the military option.

In this respect, we all should realize that, under present conditions, not only are the well-being and humanitarian requirements of the Afghan people at stake, but, above all, its national unity. There exists a real and, in fact, a growing threat of division along ethnic lines. We should not lose sight of the fact that the developments in Afghanistan seriously threaten the stability and security of the region as a whole.

My country has close ties, deeply rooted in history, with Afghanistan and the Afghan people. We feel very strongly about the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan. For the unity of the country and for the benefit of the people of Afghanistan, the Afghan leaders should respond without delay to appeals of the friends of Afghanistan to cease the hostilities and to engage in negotiations for a peaceful solution.

We, the Member States of the United Nations, and especially those closest to Afghanistan, should try only to bring about a negotiated settlement of the Afghan problem. We should, in particular, strictly refrain from military involvement and interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

For its part, Turkey is ready to do what it can to contribute to the normalization of the situation in that friendly country. We will wholeheartedly continue to support the Secretary-General's efforts to this end, as well as those of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. I would also like to remind the Council once again that, if and when the Secretary-General decides that an intra-Afghan meeting among the warring parties will contribute to peace efforts, Turkey stands ready to host such a meeting.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Pakistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): In accordance with your strict injunctions, Mr. President, I will refrain from congratulating you sincerely on the assumption of your high office, and from expressing my admiration for your predecessor, but you know, Sir, that such indeed are our deeply held sentiments.

My delegation has already outlined its reading of the underlying causes of the conflict in Afghanistan on a number of previous occasions in statements before the Council. I do not, therefore, intend to repeat those details, which set out the clear background to the situation that we are all faced with in that country and which remain as valid today as when we made those earlier statements.

What is clear to all of us is that we have a civil war in Afghanistan today. It is equally clear that the people of Afghanistan themselves, brave, noble, and peace-loving as they are, are fed up with the factional strife that has riven that country, and they earnestly dream of resuming a normal life in conditions of dignity and security.

It is incumbent upon all of us, observing Afghanistan from the outside as we do, to assist the people of Afghanistan in their quest for normalcy. This would require a comprehensive framework for restoring peace in Afghanistan, with the total commitment and support of the international community. This comprehensive framework should have political, economic and humanitarian components and should be implemented with vigour and determination.

Pakistan, for its part, is adhering to a policy of strict neutrality and non-interference in Afghanistan. We do not support a military solution, and we continue to believe that a broad-based government is the only viable solution for a multi-ethnic Afghanistan.

Pakistan has a deep vested interest in peace in Afghanistan. As a consequence of the continued instability in Afghanistan, there are more than 1.5 million refugees even today in Pakistan. We are facing great difficulties with the upkeep of these refugees in the face of donor fatigue and our own limited resources. We are also the victims of terrorism, drug trafficking and arms smuggling as a result of conditions inside Afghanistan. Our access to Central Asia, and the prospects of mutually beneficial economic collaboration with that region, have not materialized. No country in the world, therefore, has a deeper vested interest in peace in Afghanistan than does Pakistan.

Much has been said about the Taliban. The Taliban, who control Kabul and two thirds of Afghanistan, are a reality and cannot simply be wished away. Given the support that they undoubtedly have from the population in all the provinces that they control, it would be futile to indulge in name-calling, wishful thinking or military

confrontation. It would be far better obviously to engage them in constructive dialogue in an effort to get them to moderate some of their policies.

We have to take serious note of the fact that the Taliban have publicly proclaimed that they do not want to rule Afghanistan alone. They have expressed their willingness to include all ethnic groups in the formation of a government in Afghanistan. We do not hold any brief for them, but here is what we heard their representatives say during the recently concluded meeting of the Islamic summit in Islamabad:

> "The Taliban Islamic movement has been blamed differently. It is blamed as a movement started just for power for the Pashtun tribe, or it is said that this Government cannot represent the people of the Afghan nation. To deny the above-mentioned incorrect statements, we can say that this movement is neither a tribal nor a national movement, nor does it work for the advantage of a tribe or any foreign country. The movement does not allow others to interfere in Afghanistan. Similarly, it does not want to interfere in others' internal affairs. The Islamic State of Afghanistan is in favour of good relations with all countries of the world. To prove our claim of a broad-based Government in Afghanistan, we present a list of the Ministers and Governors belonging to Tajik and Uzbek tribes."

This was followed by a list of the four Tajik and Uzbek Ministers in the Ministries of Education, Refugees, and Planning in the central Government in Kabul and the three Governors of the Paktia, Parwan, and Kapisa provinces of Afghanistan. The statement of the Taliban went on to say:

> "Keeping in mind the above facts, we request all representatives of nations to convey these messages and ask the Governments to reopen their embassies in Kabul and let the Islamic State of Afghanistan represent the Afghan nation in the United Nations and in the Organization of the Islamic Conference".

Compare that effort at broad-based government to the statement made just two days ago by Commander Massoud to journalists, in which he, for his part, threatens to continue along the futile path of a military confrontation in the following words: "This year we have the intention of fighting on several fronts"; and again, "All our groups will begin fighting from several directions simultaneously".

Should the current polarization continue, or should it be encouraged from the outside, there is the danger of the fragmentation of Afghanistan along ethnic fault lines. This would have serious implications for the peace and stability of the entire region. It is therefore imperative that outside interference in support of one or the other of the contending factions cease. It is important for the international community to reiterate its total commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of Afghanistan.

There are continuing and disturbing reports of the provision of weapons and ammunition and the presence of foreign military personnel in Afghanistan. We have proposed on a number of occasions in the past that an arms embargo should be imposed on Afghanistan. We continue to believe that such an embargo would be helpful in containing the incentives for conflict. It would also have a psychological impact on the Afghans, influencing them to agree to an intra-Afghan dialogue with the aim of achieving a political settlement of the problem.

Pakistan recognizes the State of Afghanistan. We have done business with every regime in Kabul, regardless of whether it was that of Nur Mohammad Taraki, Hafizullah Amin, Mojadedi or Rabbani. We will continue to adhere to that policy.

It is important not only to be equitable, but also to be seen to be equitable towards the Afghan factions. The previous criterion for recognition of any of the factions as the legitimate Government of Afghanistan appears to have been control of Kabul. The Rabbani regime was accorded recognition when it controlled Kabul and six other provinces. Today, it has neither de facto control of the capital, as it holds sway over only three outlying provinces, nor any *de jure* legitimacy. Yet it continues to be tolerated as the Government of Afghanistan and continues to occupy Afghanistan's seat in the United Nations. This cannot be justified under any circumstances. The United Nations should adopt the "vacant seat" formula that was endorsed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in its own meetings. That would reflect reality. More importantly, it would also encourage the factions to move towards a broad-based dispensation in order to secure full international legitimacy and recognition.

In the meantime, while Pakistan welcomes this open debate in the Security Council, it is convinced that we have not heard the true voice of the Afghan people, who alone can decide on their own future. Until and unless we do so, our discussions here will continue to be ill-informed and incomplete. It is high time that the Security Council listened to the views of the Taliban in order to have a more balanced view of the situation in Afghanistan. This could be done under the Arria formula. We understand that the Taliban have representatives in New York now. The sooner the Council engages them in dialogue, the better it will be for Afghanistan.

If the Security Council again takes a position that may be perceived to be one-sided, and if it does so without contacts with the Taliban or other Afghan factions, its judgement would once again fail to reflect the true sentiments of the Afghan people. The time has now come for the international community to take a more balanced and mature view of realities on the ground in Afghanistan. There are many indications that this is the time, not least of which is the constructive attitude that we have perceived on the part of some interested parties in recent contacts.

There is therefore an urgent need to facilitate an equitable settlement which takes cognizance of realities on the ground and the ethnic and demographic spread of the population. Any other solution that does not guarantee the equitable representation of all ethnic groups in a future dispensation will not bring durable peace to Afghanistan. Pakistan is committed to supporting the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission and of the Security Council in restoring peace in Afghanistan. We have some further suggestions as to how this could be done.

An intra-Afghan conference, under the aegis of the United Nations, assisted if necessary by the Organization of the Islamic Conference, with countries having contiguous borders with Afghanistan participating as observers, should be convened in order to find a lasting solution to and settlement of the Afghan problem. The agenda for such a meeting should comprise, first, an immediate ceasefire and the exchange of prisoners and dead bodies; secondly, the formation of a political commission, consisting of representatives from all the provinces, to decide on the future dispensation and the method of its appointment; and, thirdly, the creation of a national force, on the basis of proportionate representation from all the provinces, to collect heavy weapons and to provide security.

The outcome of such an intra-Afghan meeting could then be endorsed by an international conference. In this way the international community would not only be able to put its weight behind the decisions taken by the Afghans themselves, but could also promise assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, if the Afghans honour their own decisions.

The other elements of a comprehensive approach require equal attention. We need a generous and sustained international commitment to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. We also need such assistance for the refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and we need to make effective plans for their rapid repatriation to a peaceful Afghanistan.

The time has now come for the Security Council to act decisively for the cause of peace in Afghanistan. We hope that this debate will prove to be a new milestone in the international efforts towards building an international alliance for peace in Afghanistan. Let us act in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Let us use our resources, both material and moral, to overcome the apparent political impasse; and let us act now, before it is too late.

The President: I thank the representative of Pakistan for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is His Excellency Ambassador Engin Ansay, Permanent Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to the United Nations, to whom the Council has extended an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): On behalf of the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and on my own behalf, I extend to you, Sir, our heartiest congratulations on your assumption of the high office of President of the Security Council. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference is collaborating with the United Nations in promoting the ongoing peace process in Afghanistan. Throughout the civil war in that country, the OIC has focused unreservedly on endeavours to promote a cessation of hostilities so that the necessary climate for a credible

peace process, leading to the formulation of a broad-based representative Government, may be created. In our contacts with various Afghan leaders, especially during the OIC missions to the country, including those led by Ambassador Bakr after 1994, and the three that I led in the summer of 1995 and winter of 1996, we have consistently emphasized the futility of resorting to the use of force and seeking a military solution, instead of negotiation, in finding a common workable settlement to their present predicament. Mr. Norbert Holl, Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, with whom we have maintained close relations, has also advocated this view, and together we have endeavoured to defuse tensions and assist in fostering the spirit of mutual trust and confidence among the various Afghan factions so that a climate for peace may emerge.

In this context, I would like to refer to paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's report (S/1997/240), which deals with the detention in Kabul of two French humanitarian workers. I am pleased to report that following the calls for their immediate release by the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the OIC secretariat promptly responded by using its good offices with the Taliban authorities, and with their cooperation arranged for the release and safe return of these French nationals.

The apparent overwhelming military successes of the Taliban over several of the areas previously held by the other Afghan factions have, indeed, sketched a different scenario of realities that face the country today. But if experience of other conflicts in that very region, as well as in other regions, is any guide, then there is a need, now more than ever before, for the cessation of hostilities and the serious resumption of the collective search for an honourable, workable and sustainable solution that would rescue the people of Afghanistan from the uncertainties and insecurities imposed on their lives by the devastating events of the past two decades. We fully share the Secretary-General's assertion in his report that no one should imagine that a military victory by one party over the others will resolve the Afghan problem in the long term.

While the prerogative of and the principal responsibilities for bringing peace to Afghanistan rests with the people — and especially the leadership, or leaderships of Afghanistan — other affected and interested countries in the region and elsewhere also have a role to contribute to the peace process. And it behoves those States that have influence over any particular political or military faction in Afghanistan to rise to the occasion and play a constructive role by preventing the sale and supply of arms to any of the factions in Afghanistan, by preventing the harbouring and training of militarists and by eliminating the devastating drug traffic, which has grown to an abominable volume and needs to be halted now before it reaches a catastrophic level.

As I said a moment ago, we in the OIC are endeavouring to complement the work of the United Nations to assist the diverse Afghan leadership to bring peace and tranquillity back to their country and to restore precious human rights, including those of women and children, which have been much trampled in the ensuing turmoil. To this end, the convening of a meeting of all Afghan factions that are active both inside and outside Afghanistan, including the monarchy, and other potentially influential leaders, such as General Abdul Haq, to explore and develop a commonly acceptable framework for addressing the country's political and security issues and a peaceful transfer of power, has been proposed and is being actively pursued. We in the OIC are certainly prepared to co-sponsor such a meeting, which may take place anywhere from Jeddah to Geneva, in Turkey or Germany; indeed, at any venue that is agreeable to all the Afghan participants. I hope that this approach will receive the support of the Security Council. The Secretary General of the OIC will soon visit New York, in response to the call of the Secretary-General, among other things, to consult on the advisability of such a meeting.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the OIC's full commitment to continue to play its role, constructive and complementary, to that of the United Nations, in facilitating the overall peace process in Afghanistan.

The President: I thank His Excellency Ambassador Engin Ansay for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also wish to express appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Poland for his leadership of the Council in March.

Security Council consideration of the situation in Afghanistan is a welcome indication of the decision by the international community to focus further on this most

protracted and tragic conflict. This is all the more crucial at this time because military operations and further bloodshed are likely to intensify in the spring. The Islamic Republic of Iran hopes that the outcome of the deliberations of the issue in the Security Council will send a strong message to all warring parties in Afghanistan, stating in no uncertain terms that enough is enough and demanding that all Afghan parties cease immediately all armed hostilities, abandon and renounce the use of force and take advantage of the preparedness of the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), regional States and other interested organizations and States to help them sort out their differences and engage in a political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation and a durable political settlement of the conflict and establishing a broad-based and fully representative government.

The people of this war-ravaged country have suffered much for nearly 18 long years now. They have been subjected to horrors and indignities that are not fully comprehensible to the outside world. The Afghan people have been condemned to a life of misery, in which they are engaged in illicit traffic in arms and narcotics, and even in selling the bones and remains of their dead simply in order to support their families.

Such reflection on the grim and abhorrent reality in Afghanistan is by no means intended to be soft on or find justification for criminals and illicit traffickers in arms and narcotics, particularly those Afghan factions that reportedly organize and promote such illegal activities in order to finance their military operations. In fact, such illicit traffic in arms, and particularly in narcotic drugs, is a source of grave concern in Iran. It has greatly burdened the Islamic Republic of Iran in terms of both the manpower and the financial resources it devotes to combating drug traffic at its borders.

My intention, in reflecting on the human tragedy in Afghanistan, is to draw attention to the fact that in the final analysis it is not only the legal but also the moral responsibility of the international community to address this tragic situation in an effective manner.

As a neighbour of Afghanistan that has been directly and drastically affected by developments there and has shared with the Afghan people their agonizing experience and gone out of its way to provide humanitarian assistance to them, we strongly believe that the international community must use effectively both the carrot and the stick at its disposal in Afghanistan. While the Security Council should seek ways and means of seeing to it that its resolutions are implemented, the provision of humanitarian aid and preparatory work for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the incentives they offer for progress towards a political settlement, should be explored at the same time. Under such circumstances, there certainly is a greater chance of success for the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, regional States and other interested organizations and States to help bring this conflict to an end.

Owing to the tribal character of Afghanistan and other factors, including the socialization of poverty and violence over a long period of time, the political resolution of the Afghan conflict requires a comprehensive approach whereby the views of all parties and all segments of Afghan society are taken into account. To cite the report of the Secretary-General,

> "No one should imagine that a military victory by one party over the others will resolve the Afghan problem in the long term." *(S/1997/240, para. 23)*

In our view, coordination and cooperation on the part of the regional States which are the most directly affected by the situation in Afghanistan and other interested States with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan is crucial to the international effort to find a lasting political settlement in that country. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to hold another meeting on Afghanistan of the interested States and organizations in order to coordinate regional and international efforts aimed at achieving national reconciliation in that country.

The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan should be supported and should be encouraged to further extend its contacts with all factions and groups in Afghanistan and with its neighbours. The efforts of the Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Norbert Holl, and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to bring about the restoration of peace, normalcy and national reconciliation are to be commended. These efforts should continue with even greater vigour, resolve and impartiality in order to persuade all Afghan political factions and ethnic groups to denounce the logic and the use of force and to engage in a bona fide dialogue aimed at establishing a broad-based government of national unity.

In this connection, as the Islamic Republic of Iran was gravely concerned about the repercussions of the recent escalating developments in Afghanistan on the peace and stability of the region and on the Afghan reconciliation process, it convened an intra-Afghan meeting at Tehran on 25 and 26 January this year. In addition to Afghan groups, the Head of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and representatives of Pakistan, Turkey and Turkmenistan participated in the meeting. The Tehran meeting adopted a declaration that urged all Afghan parties to abandon hostilities in favour of constructive dialogue towards a political settlement.

In our view, a set of principles should guide all international, regional and other efforts aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in Afghanistan. Such a list could include the following elements: respect for the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan; the rejection of any military solution to the Afghan problem; the rejection of foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan; refrainment from providing weapons, military personnel and advice to any and all warring factions in Afghanistan; respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Afghan people, particularly the rights of women and girls; the need for a cessation of hostilities and for the beginning of national reconciliation through a process of dialogue in which all political and ethnic groups in Afghanistan will participate.

Bearing these principles in mind, the international community should redouble its efforts to begin the political process with a view to helping the Afghan people establish a broad-based government so as to halt further violence and bloodshed and ensure the durability and fairness of the solution. In this context, the idea of the demilitarization of Kabul as an important first step merits special attention. Needless to say, this requires careful planning and the negotiation of interim administrative measures to ensure security and public order.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined, within the framework of regional and international efforts and in cooperation and coordination with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, to continue to seek to impress upon all Afghan factions and ethnic groups the need to halt the vicious cycle of violence and the indignities the Afghan people have long been subjected to, and to resolve their differences by peaceful means through a process of political dialogue in which all Afghan factions and ethnic groups are represented.

The President: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker is the representative of Germany. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rudolph (Germany): For the third time in just over a year, the Security Council is having an open debate on the situation in Afghanistan. The last 12 months have seen an increase in the activities of the international community, in particular the United Nations, to bring about a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict. The last 12 months have not seen, regrettably, an increased willingness by the Afghan parties to put an end to the fighting. Outside support for the parties seems to have continued as well.

Germany fully supports what the representative of the Netherlands said on behalf of the European Union and very much shares the concerns expressed by many in the course of yesterday's and today's open debate. With the snows melting, new and large battles may be just around the corner. The political consequences could be serious, the humanitarian impact disastrous. According to the Secretary-General's recent report, the rather limited fighting within the first two and a half months this year led to the displacement of 115,000 people from north of Kabul alone. We strongly support the request made by the United Nations to the Taliban authorities to take measures to encourage the return of the displaced to their home communities.

We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Afghanistan. In resolution 1076 (1996), adopted on 22 October 1996, the Security Council denounced the discrimination against girls and women and other violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Afghanistan. The General Assembly repeated this denunciation in its resolution 51/195, adopted by consensus on 17 December 1996, and called upon all Afghan parties to respect the human rights of every individual, regardless of gender, ethnicity and religion. In spite of these very clear expressions of the will of the international community, human rights continue to be largely violated in Afghanistan. In this respect, policies of the Taliban denying girls and women access to education and to many forms of employment are particularly disturbing. It is clear that the international standing of any Afghan party cannot be independent of its record in complying with international

obligations and the unanimous decisions of United Nations bodies.

My Government fully supports the untiring efforts of the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, that aim at exploring every possibility to bring the Afghan conflict closer to its peaceful solution. Since the open Security Council debate on Afghanistan on 9 April 1996, the United Nations Special Mission has been strengthened by the secondment of political affairs officers. Norbert Holl was appointed as its new Head. In December 1996, the General Assembly renewed the mandate of the Special Mission and further strengthened it by allowing for the deployment of three additional military advisers and two civilian police advisers.

The principles for peace in Afghanistan, as laid down in General Assembly resolution 50/88, were reaffirmed in several Security Council decisions, including resolution 1076 (1996), and updated and further elaborated in General Assembly resolution 51/195. We have said again and again that what remains to be done is to put these principles for peace into practice. So far, the parties have decided to continue fighting. But Norbert Holl and his dedicated staff have been successful in keeping channels open, to the extent where, as experience has shown, the Special Mission is currently the only institution that can bring together all parties for talks. So long as we do not want to give up hope that we may see the Afghan conflict solved peacefully, the task of the Special Mission will remain of crucial importance.

What can be done to convince the Afghan parties to renounce the military option and commit themselves to a peace process? There may be no easy answer to that question. But it is clear that it is the United Nations that must try to bring the parties to the negotiating table, and that the United Nations will need help from its Member States in doing so. Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) as well as General Assembly resolution 51/195 assign the central role in international efforts aiming at a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict to the United Nations. At the same time, both decisions call on Member States actively to support the work of the United Nations and to use any influence they have with the Afghan parties to that end.

We would therefore encourage the Secretary-General and the Special Mission to intensify their contacts with regional and other interested States on the issue of Afghanistan. The international meeting on Afghanistan planned for 16 April can be an important step in that direction. We also call upon all concerned to coordinate closely with the Special Mission all initiatives they plan with regard to Afghanistan. Any peace talks involving the Afghan parties should be chaired by the United Nations.

It has been repeated often that the Afghan conflict must be solved through negotiations and not on the battlefield. Peace in Afghanistan requires a joint effort by all of us, under the leadership of the United Nations. We must translate our strict rejection of a military solution into full support, in words and deeds, for the United Nations Special Mission. Germany stands ready to play its part, and we look forward to continued cooperation with the United Nations and with other interested Member States in pursuing our common goal of a peaceful Afghanistan.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Italy. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): The Italian delegation fully endorses the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, and would like to add some comments on particular aspects of this issue.

Afghanistan is a country that in its long history has been afflicted by recurring tensions, heightened at times by the interference of foreign countries. But this interference has always been repelled by the deeply independent character of the Afghan people. This is both ancient and modern history. Events of the past 15 years have left Afghanistan torn asunder by clashes between the various factions and prey to a civil war to which no end is in sight. Sadly, all available indications point to a probable resumption of hostilities in the coming days and weeks, with the arrival of spring making the mountain passes that dot the countryside once again viable. But if there is a lesson that can be learned from recent history, it is that a lasting solution to the Afghan crisis cannot be found on the military level but must instead be the fruit of a consultation process and of political mediation, not only between the main faction leaders, but also among the various components of Afghan society.

For many years the neighbouring countries have born the burden of millions of Afghan refugees in their territories, at a high cost. The number of refugees has gone down recently but still poses considerable problems for the host countries. We must appreciate the efforts

made by these countries and be grateful for the welcome they have extended to the refugees. These countries are indeed the most interested in finding a stable and lasting solution to the Afghan crisis, as a political settlement would also allow the return of the refugees to their homes.

In recent months the Taliban movement has gained control over an ever wider swath of the country, including the capital. The decisions made thus far by the Taliban leaders in Kabul have certainly been cause for alarm in the international community, especially in terms of respect for the human rights of women. It is worthwhile to repeat forcefully that these rights are the common heritage of all humanity, and must always be respected. We also note that the international community knows very little about the structure of that movement, and can only base its judgment on the decisions and behaviour that have raised such alarm.

Italy fully supports the mediation activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, and is also convinced that close coordination between all the negotiating efforts is needed. We hope that these initiatives can bring about significant improvements and register concrete results. In this perspective we believe that the Secretary-General's useful initiative to convene a new meeting on Afghanistan of the countries most directly interested in the Afghan crisis can help lead to innovative proposals and to indications of ways to find a solution to the crisis.

In view of its traditional friendly relations with Afghanistan, Italy has continued over these years to provide an uninterrupted flow of humanitarian assistance to the country through contributions to the specialized agencies and other United Nations structures. We look forward to the conference on coordinating humanitarian assistance activities to be held in Geneva on 21 April. It is of the utmost importance that this coordination be implemented in a way that allows the assistance to be equitably distributed to the entire Afghan population.

Italy is particularly concerned by the growing dimensions of drug production in Afghanistan. This is not a new phenomenon, but the disintegration of any semblance of central power and the economic ruin of the country have led larger segments of the population to undertake this harmful activity. The action that the factions take to cut back on the cultivation of drug crops is a litmus test of their will to participate constructively in the rebuilding of a new State that is fully entitled to be part of the international community.

In closing, let me reiterate Italy's determination to participate in the search for a compromise solution that will allow a gradual stabilization of the country, a greater flow of humanitarian assistance, and a much-needed improvement in the living conditions of the people.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Tajikistan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan, the danger of its further escalation and the attempts by the Taliban movement to settle the question of who shall rule the country to its own advantage by exclusively military means are the cause of growing concern to Tajikistan and the rest of the international community. We are particularly concerned that the civilian population is suffering as a result of hostilities. There is a growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, including citizens of Tajikistan who by chance found themselves in the Islamic State of Afghanistan at that time.

Available information suggests that in the territory controlled by the Taliban there are gross violations of basic human rights, particularly those of women. There is also abundant evidence that people are being persecuted on political and ethnic grounds and that religious fanaticism is being propagated. There have been gross violations of the norms of international law, and actions that prevent the normal performance of United Nations activities in Afghanistan. We believe that all this calls for the firmest possible reaction by the international community.

We cannot fail to be alarmed by information that the warring parties are continuing to build up their forces and are preparing for active hostilities which may very soon take on even more devastating proportions, seriously complicating and exacerbating the already critical humanitarian situation in the country. At the same time, it appears to us that there is a concomitant growing threat to regional peace and security.

Assurances that the conflict in Afghanistan is a purely internal matter seem to us to be extremely dubious. Tajikistan is giving ever-closer consideration to the possible consequences of a continuation of hostilities in fraternal Afghanistan, which is our neighbour. We have already encountered some real problems, foremost

among them the growing illegal trafficking in drugs, weapons and munitions.

In this connection, we have been making concerted efforts — together with the Russian Federation, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and both in the framework of the Almaty meeting and on a bilateral basis — to neutralize the negative impact of the ongoing intra-Afghan conflict and to secure the common interests shared by our countries in the region. This was one of the topics discussed at the consultative meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Central Asia and the Russian Federation, held on 5 April 1997 in Dushanbe. In their joint declaration, the participants in that meeting reaffirmed the readiness of their countries to continue to cooperate closely to ensure the security of the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States, particularly in the Tajik-Afghan sector of the common border. They also called upon concerned countries to promote actively a political settlement of the Afghan problem.

Tajikistan, which strictly pursues a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring Islamic State of Afghanistan, and which acknowledges the right of the Afghan people to choose whatever political system they see fit, believes that the warring parties should put an immediate end to hostilities and should start to explore ways and means of achieving agreement in order to restore peace in the country. At the same time, the legitimate interests of all ethnic and religious groups and regions must be taken into account. In this connection, we cannot fail to be alarmed by the fact that the Taliban movement, under various pretexts, is frustrating all attempts to begin an intra-Afghan dialogue at a responsible level and has also rejected every invitation to sit down at the negotiating table, whether from individual States or from the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan.

Tajikistan wholeheartedly supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Holl, and is prepared to give it every assistance. We believe that the United Nations and its Member States must intensify their efforts to resolve the Afghan problem before the situation gets even worse. We share the Secretary-General's view that we must all ensure that our actions are coordinated in order to step up international pressure on the Afghan sides and to induce them to resolve the conflict through peaceful means. It is quite clear that no single Afghan military-political faction should impose its will on the others.

We also believe that United Nations resolutions and decisions on Afghanistan provide an excellent basis for exploring ways and means to resolve the conflict. What we need now is for all these resolutions to be implemented strictly. This means, first and foremost, that there should be no outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan and that an end should be put to the supply of weapons and the provision of any military or logistical assistance to the warring factions. We also expect that the forthcoming second meeting of concerned countries on Afghanistan will help achieve consensus on how to approach an Afghan settlement and will suggest additional ways and means to strengthen the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Portugal.

The Presidency of the European Union has already stated the common views of its member States on Afghanistan. Therefore, I will emphasize only certain elements of my country's position with regard the situation in that country.

As the fighting continues, we urge the parties to halt hostilities. A ceasefire should be the first step, to enable them to begin real negotiations aimed at a political settlement. Only in that way will the territorial integrity of Afghanistan be maintained and will the Afghan people be able to enjoy peace as an independent and sovereign country.

Yet this may not be at hand, as one of the parties seems to be convinced that it is in a position to take over the whole country militarily. But the past 18 years of war in Afghanistan lead us to believe that a military victory by one of the warring parties will not bring an end to the fighting. The United Nations must help to break this cycle and induce the parties to move forward towards a political settlement. The Security Council must send a precise, concise and clear message in support of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. We must make sure that the parties and their external backers get this message.

This open meeting of the Council is instrumental in sending the international community's message that the United Nations is committed to a settlement in Afghanistan. With that purpose, the Council fully backs the efforts of the Organization's main instrument in Afghanistan, the United Nations Special Mission. The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan plays a

central role in that process and all United Nations Members must cooperate with it, by coordinating any initiatives regarding Afghanistan with the Head of the Mission, Mr. Norbert Holl.

For too long, Afghanistan has been subject to interference from outside, which has only served to prolong the conflict. Like others, we call for an end to such interference and an end to the supply of arms and ammunition to the factions, which continues despite the denials of those involved. I would like to recall that following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1076 (1996), the European Union decided to impose an arms embargo on Afghanistan. We urge others to follow the same pattern.

Two other extremely worrying features of the Afghan conflict continue: drug trafficking and the existence of terrorist training camps. These two factors not only help fuel the conflict but also constitute a serious threat to peace and security in the whole region. We urge the parties to put an end to these intolerable destabilizing practices.

Every new day of war in Afghanistan brings misery and suffering to the civilian population. And every day that Afghanistan remains without a broad-based interim Government and an effective civilian administration, the country is pushed further backwards on the scale of economic and human development. In the humanitarian field, the fighting has caused heavy casualties and has forced thousands of civilians to flee their homes and many more to flee the country. We, too, call on all factions to cooperate with the delivery of humanitarian aid to all the people of Afghanistan, irrespective of their ethnic group, race or gender. Portugal expresses its deep concern about the widespread violations of fundamental human rights in Afghanistan, in particular the intolerable measures imposed by the Taliban affecting the rights of girls and women.

The Security Council must make it known to all the factions that they are responsible not only for complying with humanitarian law, but also for respecting and implementing international human rights standards with regard to each and every citizen in Afghanistan.

The United Nations stands ready to assist the parties in reaching peace and national reconciliation. But the parties bear the primary responsibility in this task.

Those countries which have been channelling humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan would certainly prefer to divert resources to the huge reconstruction needs of the country. But the Afghan parties should be made aware that this will not happen until peace is achieved.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan has asked to speak. I now call on him.

Mr. Ghafoorzai (Afghanistan): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank, in the name of the Afghan nation, all those who have participated during these last two days in the debate on Afghanistan. On behalf of tormented Afghan women, I would especially like to thank all those countries that took a strong stance in defence of the God-given rights of women in Afghanistan against the brutal, un-Islamic, uncivilized behaviour and deeds of the Taliban, in violation of basic human rights, basic principles of democracy and basic principles of the United Nations Charter to which we are all committed.

We have heard the appeals made in the debate by members of the Security Council and other members of the United Nations to all of the Afghan conflicting sides to choose negotiations instead of conflict and war. As far as the Islamic State of Afghanistan is concerned, I can assure all Council members that these appeals will be communicated and will be heard. As far as we are concerned, we have adopted a policy of respecting both General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. We have expressed our readiness to support Mr. Holl's Mission. We have also expressed our support for any negotiated political settlement, at any venue, on any platform.

It has been, and continues to be, the Taliban who have adopted an intransigent attitude towards the United Nations. This reality is reflected in the records of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

We also heard a statement today by Ambassador Kamal of Pakistan. We were not caught by surprise, but we were somewhat disappointed, because the Prime Minister of Pakistan had promised that he would reconsider the policy of the new Pakistani Government with regard to the issue of Afghanistan. However, the statement made by the Ambassador of Pakistan was the only one with a totally different tone and spirit, when we compare it with the statements made by all representatives who took part in the debate.

Security Council members may recall that at one of the consultation meetings of the Council, it was reported that the former Minister of the Interior of Pakistan, Mr. Naseerullah Babar, had stated in a meeting in Mazar-i-Sharif that he had power of attorney from the Taliban. The Council members were surprised to hear that; yet it was once again repeated by the representative of the Secretariat that this is exactly what the former Minister of the Interior of Pakistan had said.

Upon hearing the Pakistani Ambassador's statement, it became somewhat clear that the Government of Pakistan is still trying to lend some kind of legitimacy to the Taliban mercenaries. When we say mercenaries, I think we have adequate reasons to justify describing the Taliban as a mercenary group. We have presented and submitted more than adequate documentation that they are being trained, financed, armed and equipped in Pakistani territory, in Quetta, and then they are being sent into Afghanistan for operations.

The Ambassador of Pakistan made some suggestions. First of all, he was of the opinion that the Taliban are not the kind of power to be washed away easily. We have never advocated that the Taliban should not be heard, that they should not have any role in shaping the future political situation of Afghanistan. It is the Taliban who have continuously rejected any proposal for dialogue and negotiations.

By inviting the New York-based Taliban representative, the Ambassador of Pakistan even approached the point of giving the exact location and address of the Taliban office in New York. It was somewhat surprising. He was inviting the New York Taliban under the Arria formula.

That would constitute a recognition that the current contacts between Mr. Holl and the Taliban are useless and inadequate. Moreover, I wonder whether there is any need for the Taliban to have a voice in the United Nations as long as they enjoy the presence of a loyal representative here.

For the Council to listen to the Taliban under the Arria formula would basically run counter to the resolutions of the General Assembly with regard to mercenaries, especially those who are used against the right to self-determination of peoples throughout the world. That would definitely establish a dangerous precedent.

The Ambassador of Pakistan said that he would prefer the "vacant seat" formula to be used for Afghanistan, and he referred to a decision of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. I was not clear about the decision to which he referred, because the Islamic State of Afghanistan continues to represent Afghanistan at the Organization of the Islamic Conference. There have been many gatherings and meetings, the last as recently as three weeks ago. The representative of the Islamic State of Afghanistan represented Afghanistan at the meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, that was held, at ambassadorial level, in New York.

What happened in Islamabad? I think that the presence of some esteemed leaders of Islamic countries at the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of Pakistan was used by the host country for political gain, in favour of the Taliban. The Ambassador of Pakistan also referred to the statement made by Commander Massoud, in which he indicated his resoluteness to continue to fight on in various battles against the Taliban. Yes, he said that; he made that statement. As long as the Taliban continue to reject any proposal for dialogue and political settlement, Commander Massoud and the other members of the Supreme Council for the Defence of Afghanistan have no option but to continue to defend the territorial integrity, national unity and sovereignty of Afghanistan.

In brief, I would like to put on the record of the Security Council the fact that tolerance of the Taliban and their supporters would mean tolerance of human rights violations; justification of obscurantism; opposition to the principles of democracy; rejectionism; and a continued intransigent attitude towards the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

The President: The representative of Pakistan has asked to speak. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): I do not intend to respond to the statement that we have just heard, coming as it does from a person who has neither de facto control, nor *de jure* legitimacy within his own country. But it is, unfortunately, full of inaccuracies, which may, somehow, lead the Security Council to base its own decisions on false information. It is that information which needs to be put correctly on the record.

I made the statement that the Organization of the Islamic Conference had decided to follow a "vacant seat" approach with regard to Afghanistan. That formula was used in the Jakarta meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and in the Islamabad meeting. Those were not ambassadorial-level meetings; they were at the ministerial level and above. It was at that level that the Organization of the Islamic Conference decided not to have anybody sitting in the Afghanistan seat at its meetings.

A statement was made about Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan. We have said repeatedly that we have no favourites in Afghanistan. We are convinced that the Afghans themselves will be able to find peace and security in their country only through a broad-based dispensation. We know that those in this Chamber who claim to represent Afghanistan do not have *de jure* legitimacy. They were chosen as the result of a particular formula evolved in Islamabad by which they were given eight months, no more, to organize elections only. They did not do it. At the end of the eight months — minority Government that they were — they tried to hold on to their seats, thinking that they could overrun the whole of Afghanistan. That was a moral denial of the commitment that they had given to their own Afghan colleagues.

It is their insistence on trying to run matters alone — as a minority which, as is generally known, has the backing of no more than 15 per cent of the population — that has led to the situation in which Afghanistan finds itself today. Pakistan is a neighbouring country of Afghanistan and I agree with all the representatives of other neighbouring countries who have spoken today and have expressed fear about the fallout from the situation, the root cause of which is the insistence of this particular Rabbani regime on holding on to power, and its failure to honour commitments solemnly made to colleagues and in the holiest of holies of the Muslim world.

It is not in anger that I speak, because I cannot be angry with people who have no legitimacy. But pain can be caused even by a mosquito bite, and it is that pain to which I am responding. We are here in the Security Council to try to help find a solution to the problem of Afghanistan. It is not an easy situation. We are faced with a country that is ethnically divided. The formula with which we, as outsiders, have tried to come forward, is that the country requires a broad-based government. The United Nations has subscribed to that formula. It is fundamental to the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan. That is the formula on which we need to go forward. In order to proceed on the basis of that formula, it is essential for this body to hear all the representatives of the Afghan people. It cannot decide in isolation. That was the point that we made: it is incumbent upon the Security Council, if it wants to find a logical and legal solution that will be durable in Afghanistan, to base such a solution on hearing the Afghan people across the board, by any formula that may be deemed fit — inside this Chamber, or outside it if necessary. The parties must be heard; they must be heard before conclusions are reached. The facile argument has been made that to hear them would mean bypassing the special representative. So why are we sitting here for this debate? We do not need it: the special representative is good enough. We all have respect for Mr. Norbert Holl.

But we are meeting here today so that we can exchange views. And those views have to be based on dialogue and a willingness to listen to all before deciding. I do hope that the Security Council will prove itself to be up to that task of listening to all the representatives of the Afghan people by whatever formula it deems fit.

The President: The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan has asked to speak again, but I have to seek the opinion of the members of the Council before granting this request.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau) (*interpretation from French*): We have great respect for the delegations represented here and great consideration for the positions they express here.

I do not think it would serve the purpose we are trying to achieve here to allow our Afghan friends and our colleague from Pakistan to engage in an exchange of views that could only exacerbate the debate and could divert us from the task we have set ourselves here: working towards peace in Afghanistan through dialogue. Let me therefore appeal to the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan and to my colleague Mr. Kamal to give up their debate, however, useful it may be, so that we can find our way by using the points we have already heard, which seem sufficiently clear for us to fashion the elements to be contained in the draft statement we intend to submit to the members of the Council for approval.

The President (*interpretation from French*): With your agreement, Mr. Minister, we shall continue.

(spoke in English)

There are no further speakers. The resumption of this meeting to continue the consideration of the item on the agenda will be fixed in consultation with the members of the Council.

The meeting was suspended at 5.55 p.m.